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(55) Osteosynthesis means for the connection of bone fracture segments.

(57) Osteosynthesis means comprising a plate (3) secured to one bone fracture segment (1), and at least a screw (8) inserted inside a hole (9) on the plate (3) and screwed into corresponding holes (11, 12) in the bone segments; characterised by the fact that they comprise an angle joint (13) located between the screw (8) and the hole (9) in the plate (3), and designed to enable the axis of the screw (8) to be positioned in relation to the plate (3) at any angle within a conical surface whose axis coincides with that of the hole (9) in the plate (3).

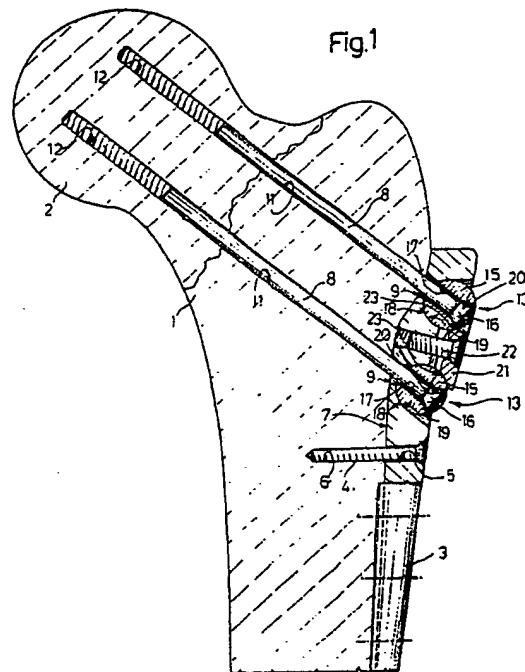


Fig.1

## OSTEOSYNTHESIS MEANS FOR THE CONNECTION OF BONE FRACTURE SEGMENTS

The present invention relates to osteosynthesis means for the treatment of bone fractures and in particular for the connection of bone fracture segments.

The assemblies currently employed for the treatment of bone fractures substantially comprise a plate secured surgically to one of the bone fracture segments, e.g. by means of one or more screws inserted through holes on the plate and screwed into matching holes on the bone segment; and at least one screw inserted through a further hole on the plate and screwed into a matching hole on both segments. Once the bone segments are firmly knit, the various elements in the assembly are removed. Said second screws inserted inside the second segment for connecting it to the first are longer than those connecting the plate to the first segment, and must be positioned at a predetermined angle in relation to the plate, so as to fit precisely inside the matching holes on the second segment.

Assemblies of the type briefly described above present a number of drawbacks.

Firstly, they fail to provide for correct support between the plate and mating segment when the screws connecting the two segments are screwed inside the respective holes on the same. This is due to the axes of said screws forming a predetermined angle in relation to the plate, which permits no or only a very small amount of adjustment, i.e. that permitted by the slack between the hole in the plate and the screw shank. Very rarely, however, does said angle correspond to that formed between the axes of the holes in the bone segments and the plate supporting surface on the bone.

Secondly, assembly of the various component parts involved to the bone segments is not only difficult but requires considerable care and skill.

Thirdly, the versatility of assemblies of the aforementioned type is extremely limited, by virtue of the size and shape of the component parts depending on the geometrical characteristics of the bone segments for connection.

Fourthly, known assemblies of the aforementioned type may lead to complications and delayed healing of the fracture in the period immediately following the surgical operation. During this period, in fact, absorption generally takes place at the fracture surfaces, thus altering the position of the ends of the bone segments, which, using known assemblies of the aforementioned type, are prevented from moving by the rigid restraints consisting of the plate and respective screws. This results in undue stress on the fracture surfaces, which may even be caused to move away from each

other.

Finally, the mechanical strength and stability of the connection provided for by such assemblies are fairly poor, so that steps must be taken for preventing relative movement of the bone segments in the period immediately following surgery.

The aim of the present invention is to provide osteosynthesis means for the connection of bone fracture segments of the type briefly described above, and designed to overcome the aforementioned drawbacks, i.e. means enabling highly accurate positioning and strong, reliable connection of the bone segments; fast, easy assembly; maximum versatility in terms of application; and rapid healing of the bone fracture.

With these aims in view, according to the present invention, there are provided osteosynthesis means for the connection of bone fracture segments, comprising a plate secured to one of said segments; and at least a screw inserted inside a hole on said plate and screwed into corresponding holes in said segments; characterised by the fact that they also comprise an angle joint located between said screw and said hole in said plate, and designed to enable the axis of said screw to be positioned in relation to said plate at any angle within a conical surface whose axis coincides with that of said hole in said plate.

The present invention will be described in detail, by way of a non-limiting example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig.1 shows a partially-sectioned side view of a first embodiment of the means according to the present invention, employed for connecting two femur segments;

Fig.2 shows a plan view of the Fig.1 means;

Fig.3 shows a section along line III-III of the Fig.2 means;

Fig.4 shows a partially-sectioned side view of a second embodiment of the means according to the present invention;

Fig.5 shows a view in perspective of an adjustable element forming part of the Fig.4 means;

Fig.6 shows a section of part of a further embodiment of the means according to the present invention;

Fig.7 shows a schematic section of two elements in Fig.6.

As shown in Fig.1, the means according to the present invention provide for connecting two bone fracture segments, e.g. femur segments 1 and 2, and substantially comprise a plate 3 secured in any convenient manner to one of said segments, e.g. segment 1, using screws 4 inserted inside holes 5

on plate 3 and screwed into corresponding holes 6 in segment 1. Surface 7 of plate 3 contacting the surface of segment 1 is conveniently designed to rest directly on said segment surface.

The means according to the present invention also comprise further screws 8, each designed to fit through a hole 9 on the end portion of plate 3, through a hole 11 in segment 1, and to screw into a hole 12 in segment 2. As shown in Fig.1, only end portion 27 of each screw 8 is threaded, whereas the rest of the shank is smooth, and each threaded portion 27 is shorter than the respective hole 12 in segment 2.

The means according to the present invention also comprise an angle joint 13 located between each screw 8 and respective hole 9 in plate 3, and designed to enable the axis of screw 8 to be positioned in relation to plate 3 at any angle within a conical surface the axis of which coincides with that of hole 9.

Each angle joint 13 may conveniently be designed as shown in Fig.s 1 and 2, in which case, it comprises an adjustable element 15 housing head 16 of screw 8, and having a hole 17 for the shank of the same. Each adjustable element 15 also comprises at least a spherical surface portion 18 designed to mate with a spherical seat 19 formed about hole 9 on plate 3, and conveniently consists simply of a ball with a hole 17, as shown in the Fig.1 embodiment.

Each adjustable element 15 also presents a seat 20 housing head 16 of screw 8.

Means are provided for locking angle joints 13 and securing screw 8 at a predetermined angle in relation to plate 3, said means conveniently comprising a plate 21 secured to plate 3 by means of at least a threaded connecting member 22, and having surface portions 23 designed to exert predetermined pressure on adjustable element 15 for preventing movement of the same.

Each of elements 15 may conveniently be formed as shown in Fig.s 4 and 5, in which case, it consists of two parts 24, 25 having flat mating surfaces 26 (Fig.5) lying in the equatorial plane of the element. When each adjustable element 15 consists of a ball, therefore, parts 24 and 25 are separated by the equatorial plane of said ball.

The Fig.4 embodiment may be employed when the threaded end portion 27 of each screw 8 presents a larger diameter than the screw shank. In this case, by virtue of the diameter of hole 17 in each adjustable element 15 being substantially equal to that of the screw shank, and therefore smaller than that of threaded portion 27, screw 8 may be removed from segments 1 and 2 by simply detaching parts 24 and 25 of each angle joint 13 from plate 3 as described later on.

In the Fig.6 embodiment, each angle joint 13

substantially comprises an adjustable element 15 having a hole 17 for the shank of screw 8, and at least a conical surface portion 28 cooperating with a conical seat 29 on plate 3, as shown clearly in Fig.6. The axis (a1 in Fig.7) of hole 17 in adjustable element 15 forms a predetermined angle with axis a2 of conical surface portion 28.

The osteosynthesis means described above are employed as follows.

- 10 First of all, an assembly is formed comprising plate 3, adjustable elements 15, screws 8, plate 21 and screws 22 for connecting plate 21 and said elements to plate 3. Once holes 11 and 12 have been formed in bone segments 1 and 2, screws 8
- 15 are inserted inside holes 11 in segment 1 and screwed inside holes 12 in segment 2. Surface 7 of plate 3 is then placed on segment 1, as shown in Fig.1, which operation is simplified by virtue of angle joints 13, which enable plate 3 to adjust in
- 20 relation to screws 8, and so achieve perfect mating of surface 7 of plate 3 on segment 1 regardless of the position of the hole 11 and 12 axes.

Plate 3 is then secured to segment 1 using screws 4 inserted inside holes 6.

- 25 The above procedure, therefore, not only provides for extremely straightforward connection of segments 1 and 2, but also for highly accurate mutual positioning of the same.

Moreover, the means according to the present invention provide for a high degree of versatility by enabling the connection of bone segments of different shapes and sizes, by virtue of angle joints 13 enabling adjustment of the axes of screws 8.

- 30 In addition to considerably improving the mechanical strength and stability of the connection, the means according to the present invention also provide for maintaining correct mutual positioning of the bone segments in the period immediately following surgery and pending complete knitting of the same, regardless of whether or not additional precautions are taken. In particular, when more than one screw 8 is employed, the resulting connection also presents a high mechanical resistance to the torques which would otherwise cause the bone segments to rotate about an axis parallel to that of the screws. During the period in which the fracture surfaces are absorbed, the contacting segments may undergo a change, particularly a reduction, in length, which changes are permitted by the special retaining conditions provided for by the means according to the present invention. Any reduction in length of the bone segments is permitted by virtue of the smooth shank portions of screws 8 sliding inside respective holes 11 in segment 1, and by virtue of heads 16 of screws 8 withdrawing from respective seats 20 on adjustable elements 15 and projecting in relation to plate 3 with no impairment in the characteristics of the
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connection. Moreover, once screws 8 are screwed inside holes 12 in segment 2; compressive stress may be produced as required between the mating surfaces of the fracture, for ensuring fast, safe knitting of the bone segments. Once the bone segments are knit strongly enough to dispense with screws 8, these are removed by simply unscrewing them. In the case of the Fig.1 embodiment, the threaded portions of screws 8 may be withdrawn through holes 17 in adjustable elements 15. In the case of screws 8 of the Fig.4 type, wherein threaded end portions 27 present a larger diameter than the screw shanks, screws 8 may be removed from the bone by detaching parts 24 and 25 of each adjustable element 15, the two-part design of which provides for detaching it easily from the rest of the assembly.

Once assembled as required, screws 8 may be locked in position by the locking means on the assembly, consisting of plates 21 and screws 22. By torquing screws 22, sufficient pressure is exerted by surface portions 23 of plates 21 on adjustable elements 15 for preventing any movement of the same.

As in the previous embodiment, angle joints 13 in the Fig.6 embodiment enable the shank of each screw 8 to be positioned at any angle within a conical surface whose axis coincides with that of each hole 9. In fact, by virtue of the angle formed between axes a1 and a2, rotation of adjustable element 15 inside respective conical seat 29 enables axis a1 of screw 8 to be positioned at a predetermined angle in relation to plate 3. For enabling rotation of adjustable element 15 as described, provision may be made on element 15 for a screwdriver slot 30.

To those skilled in the art it will be clear that changes may be made to both the form and arrangement of the component parts of the embodiments described and illustrated herein without, however, departing from the scope of the present invention.

## Claims

1) - Osteosynthesis means for the connection of bone fracture segments (1, 2), comprising a plate (3) secured to one (1) of said segments; and at least a screw (8) inserted inside a hole (9) on said plate (3) and screwed into corresponding holes (11, 12) in said segments (1, 2); characterised by the fact that they also comprise an angle joint (13) located between said screw (8) and said hole (9) in said plate (3), and designed to enable the axis of said screw (8) to be positioned in relation to said plate (3) at any angle within a conical surface whose axis coincides with that of

said hole (9) in said plate (3).

2) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in Claim 1, characterised by the fact that each said screw (8) comprises a smooth shank having a threaded end portion (27) the length of which is equal to or shorter than that of the corresponding hole (12) formed in the segment (2) furthest from said plate (3).

10 3) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, characterised by the fact that they comprise means (21, 22) for locking said joint (13) and for locking said screw (8) at a predetermined angle in relation to said plate (3).

15 4) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one of the foregoing Claims, characterised by the fact that said angle joint (13) comprises an adjustable element (15) having a hole (17) for the shank of said screw (8) and at least a spherical surface portion (18); and a spherical seat (19) for said spherical surface portion (18), formed about said hole (9) on said plate (3).

20 5) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in Claim 4, characterised by the fact that said adjustable element (15) comprises two parts (24, 25) having flat mating surfaces (26) lying in the equatorial plane of said element (15).

25 6) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one of the foregoing Claims from 1 to 4, characterised by the fact that said adjustable element (15) consists of a ball having a hole (17) the axis of which passes through the center of said ball.

30 7) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in Claim 1, characterised by the fact that said angle joint (13) comprises an adjustable element (15) having a hole (17) for the shank of said screw (8) and at least a conical surface portion (28); and a conical seat (19) for said conical surface portion (28) of said adjustable element (15); the axis of said hole (17) in said adjustable element (15) forming a predetermined angle with the axis of said conical surface portion (28) of said element (15).

35 8) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one of the foregoing Claims, characterised by the fact that said locking means (21, 22) comprise a plate (21) secured to said plate (3) by means of at least one threaded connecting member (22) and having at least a surface portion (23) designed to exert predetermined pressure on said adjustable element (15) for preventing movement of the same.

40 9) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one of the foregoing Claims, characterised by the fact that said adjustable element (15) comprises a seat (20) housing the head (16) of said screw (8).

45 10) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one of the foregoing Claims, characterised by the fact that said plate (3) comprises two said seats (19) for respective said adjustable elements (15).

50 11) - Osteosynthesis means as claimed in one

of the foregoing Claims, characterised by the fact  
that said seats (19) are formed on an end portion of  
said plate (3).

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Fig.1

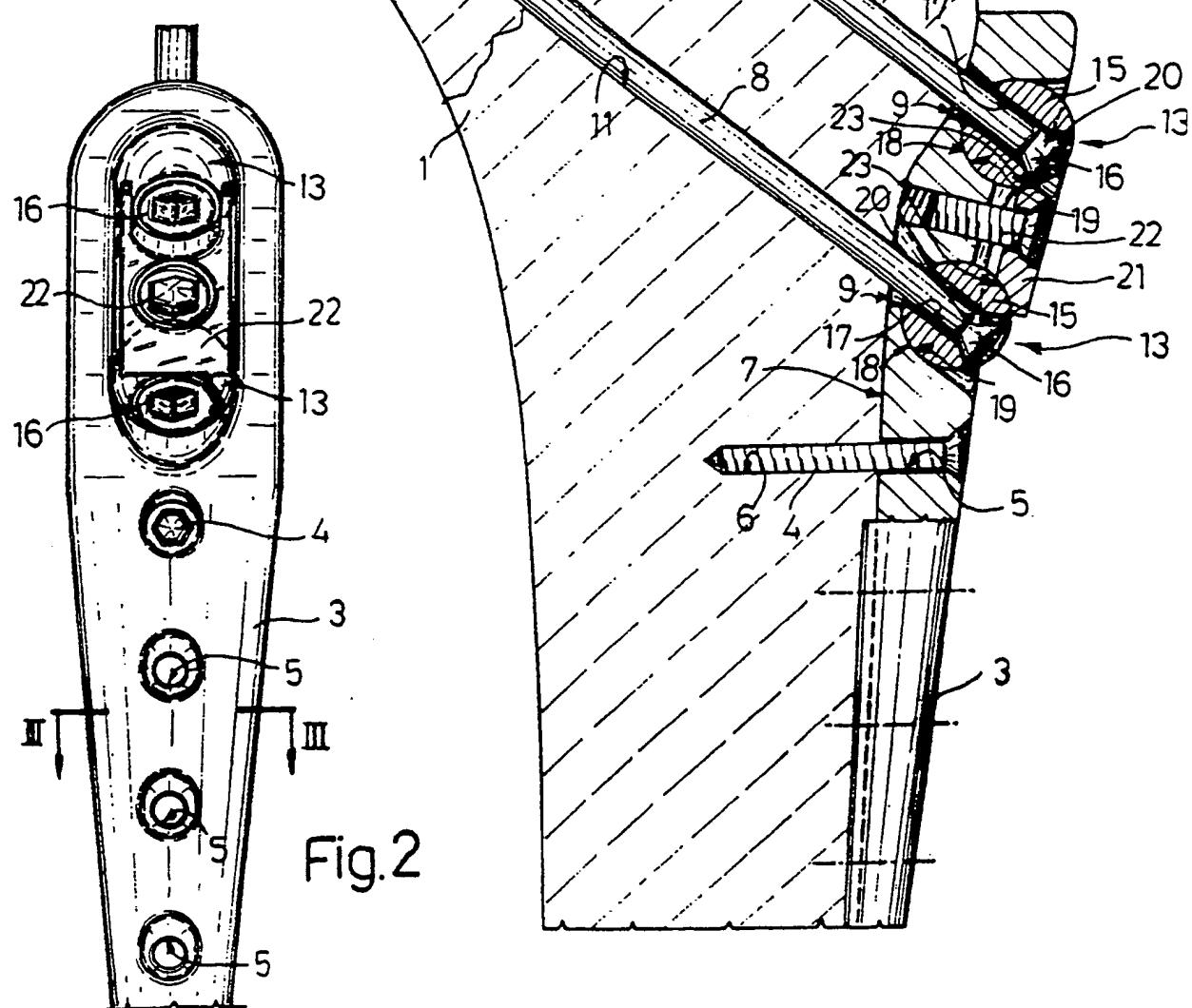
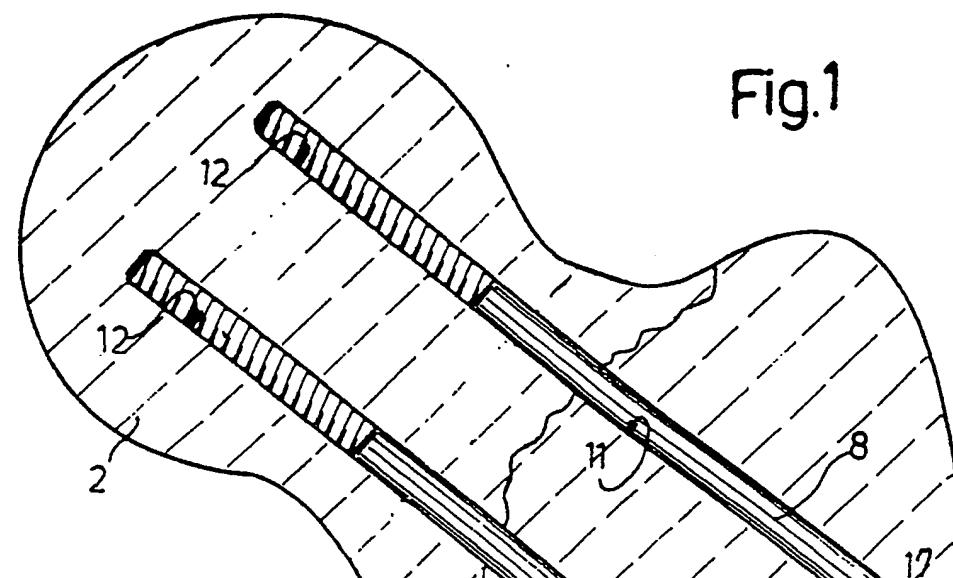


Fig.2

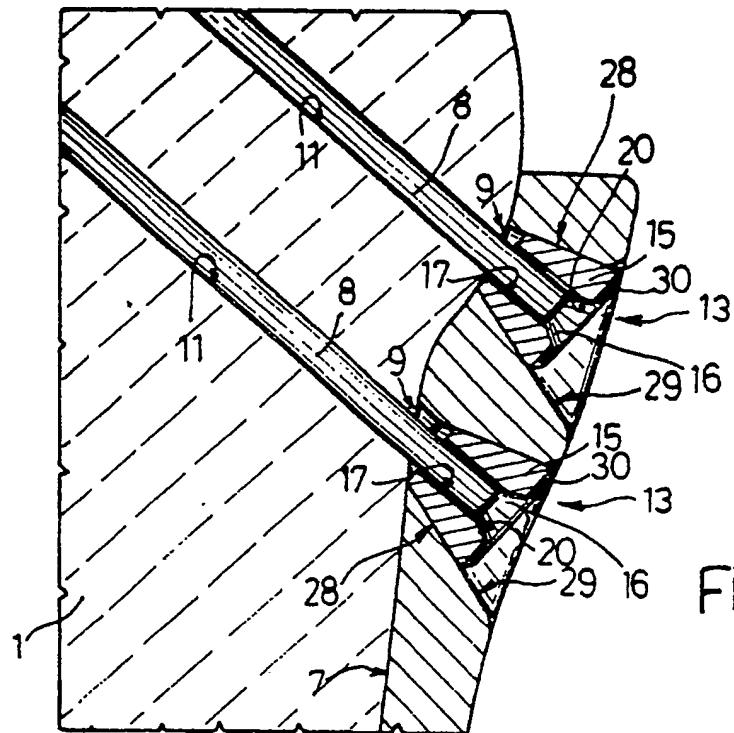


Fig. 6

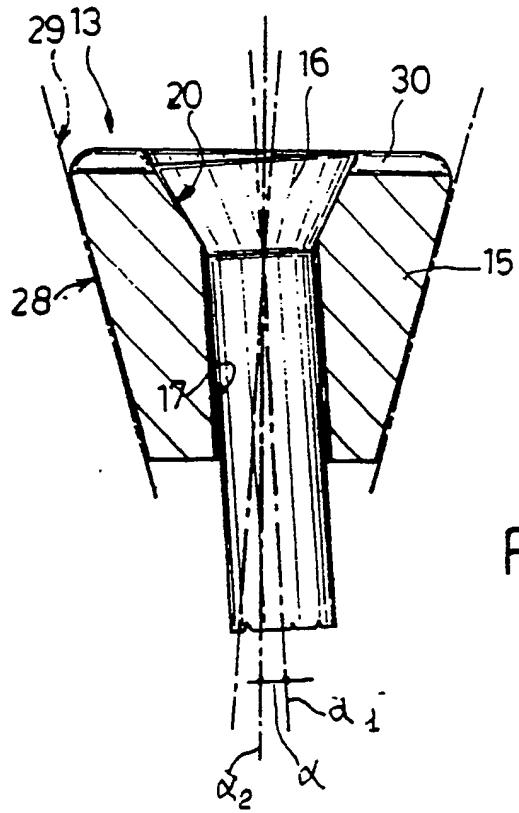


Fig. 7

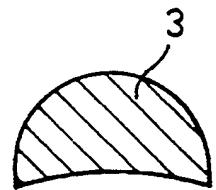


Fig. 3

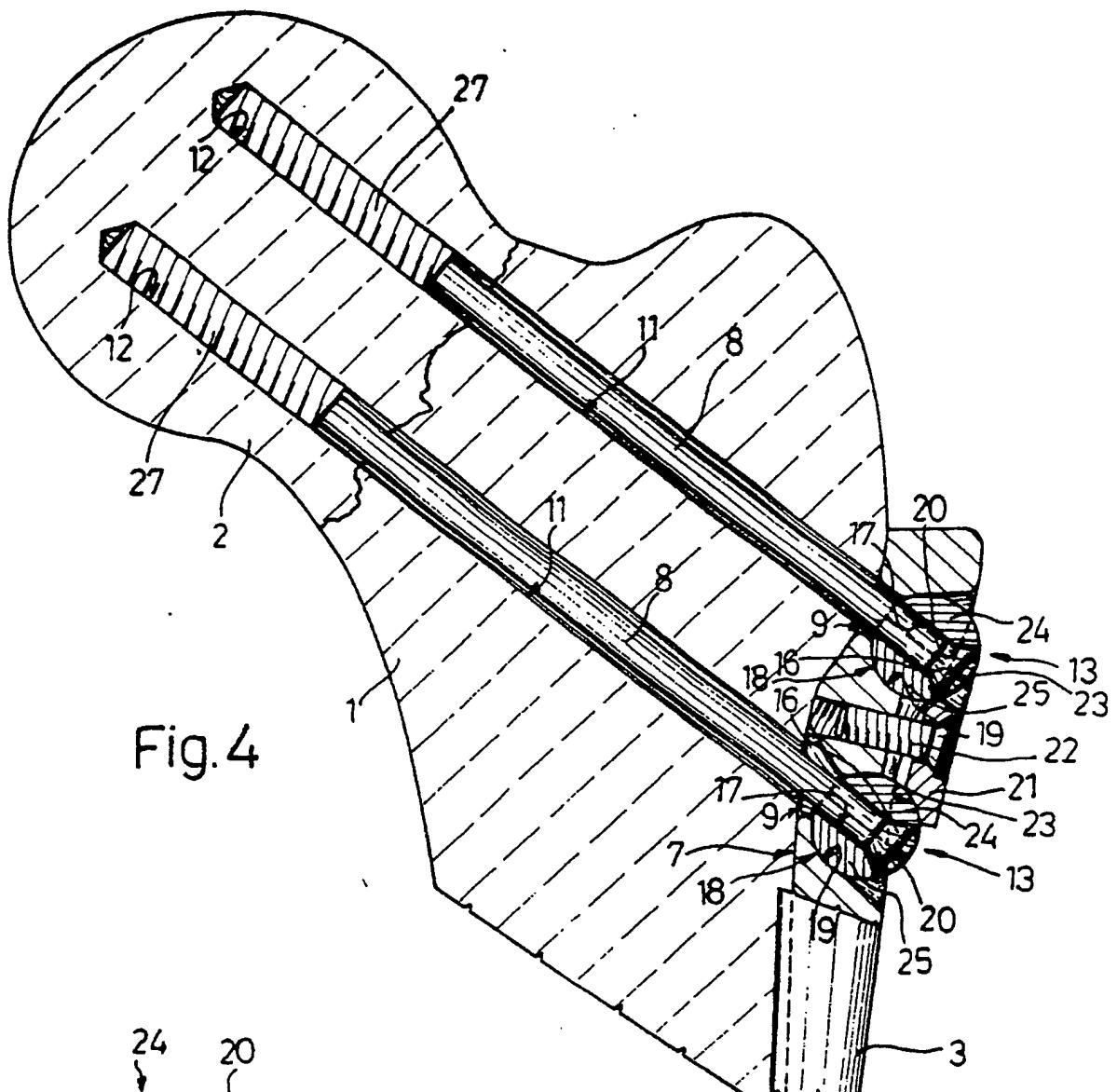


Fig. 4

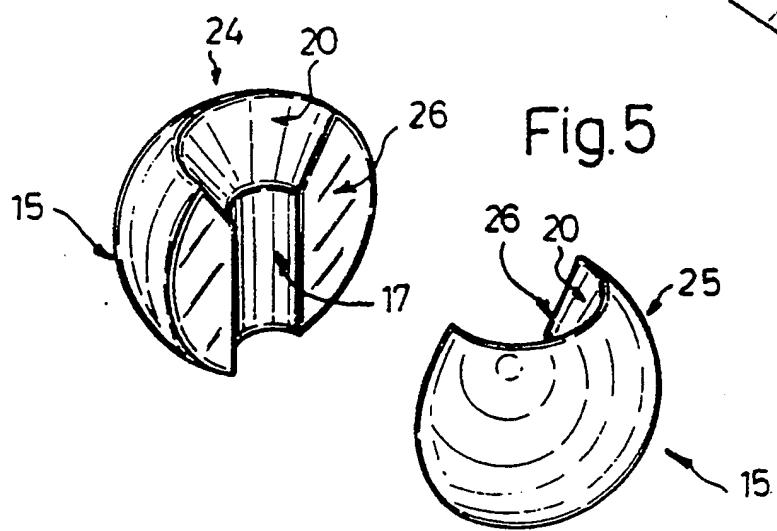


Fig. 5



EP 90 10 2608

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 5)
X	DE-A-3 027 148 (INSTITUT STRAUMANN AG) * Page 10, lines 15-19; page 14, line 1 - page 15, line 19; figures 13,14 *	1,3,4,6 ,9-11	A 61 B 17/56 A 61 B 17/58
A	---	5	
X	FR-A-2 254 298 (CHATIN) * Page 3, lines 13-39; figures 4-6 *	1,2,9- 11	
A	---	7	
A	US-A-3 842 825 (WAGNER) * Column 2, line 62 - column 3, line 17; figures 2-4,6 *	1,3,8	
P,X	WO-A-8 904 150 (SYNTHES) * Page 7, lines 5-11; figure 6 *	1,3,4,6 ,9	
E	EP-A-0 355 035 (SYNTHES) * Column 4, lines 14-22; figure 6 *	1,3,4,6 ,9	
A	FR-A-2 499 400 (ETABLISSEMENTS TORNIER) * Page 2, lines 8-20; figure 1 *	1,5	
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A 61 B			
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